**SCRIPT BITS!**
Issue: Sonic the Hedgehog #160 (MAR'06)
Pages: p7, p8, p9, p11, p13, p14

Welcome one and all to the first ever **Script Bits!** This monthly feature will take roughly forty-five percent of a story in Archie Comic's *Sonic the Hedgehog* and present it to you as insight into the writing process.

Part of the fun of this feature will be comparing what was written and what saw print. Sometimes the vision is tweaked as the artists interpret the script. Sometimes the original idea doesn't work once put on paper and must be adjusted from there. Sometimes the artist has a stroke of genius and does something different than what the script calls for - and it's for the better!

So pull out your copy of *Sonic the Hedgehog* #160 from March of 2006 and get ready to read along!

**Remembering "Birthday Bash!" part one**

"Giving and Receiving," the subtitle for this issue, was actually my sixth script for *Sonic*. I had already done a great deal of data collection behind the scenes and tested the waters with "See Ya Later, Chao!" which hasn't seen print as of this installment. Then came the three-part "The Darkest Storm" which I'll be addressing in future "Script Bits!"

"Birthday Bash!" was conceived and inserted before "TDS" in part to ease the transition from Ken Penders's phenomenally long run ending with his epic Shadow story. Secondly, it was in part to commemorate Sonic's 15th anniversary - his "birthday" of sorts.

This issue also served as the springboard for a retooled villain: Scourge the Hedgehog. The idea was born from a conversation between editor Mike Pellerito and another co-worker. The idea took flight and went through many minds - myself and Patrick Spazinate included - until Scrouge was finally conceptualized.

The challenge of the story was to carry the attention with our heroes in Knothole while the very action-packed subplot played out miles away on Angel Island. The idea of Dr. Eggman sending assassins as a birthday present wasn't very hard, but thinking of *who* to send became a problem. All our B-list villains were busy with Nack in jail and the Destructix already committed to "debuting" in "TDS." A random robot would seem pointless, while a bigger name ( i.e. Metal Sonic or Omega) would be wasted on the moment.

That's when we decided to bring in Bean the Dynamite Duck and Bark the Polar Bear. I had made it known early on that I wanted them in the comic. Bringing them in as a duo was my preference, but I was ready to go with what was needed and work from there. Thankfully, the lack of biographies on both of them and the story allowed us to import them both as B-list villains. They would carry us to the unifying threat that showed up at the end of the story and kept our attention as much as Scourge's creation sub-plot. It also gave us the opportunity to introduce another sub-plot that will be far-reaching in the comic.

The pages included in this installment are somewhat Bean and Shadow-focused since that was what was requested on my Sonic form - This Side of Mobius

(www.bumbleking.com/forum). Also included are pages that feature a few moments where penciler Tracy Yardley tweaked the scene, and a few moments where you can see my thinking within certain scenes. We close out with the debuts of Scourge and the beginning of a joke - Croctobot! We'll get to the "punch line" next month.

Thanks for reading **Script Bits!**

**PAGE SEVEN**

**PANEL ONE - We now sit on FIONA's shoulder, extreme close-up, as she matches BARK's glare.**

**PANEL TWO - BARK sits, dejectedly, his hands on the top of his head. He doesn't make eye-contact. FIONA crosses her arms and smirks triumphantly.**

FIONA
I'm glad you're still reasonable.

**PANEL THREE - Outside FREEDOM HQ. BEAN's back is to us as he jingles the keys between his fingers. We see a vague shadow approaching BEAN's feet.**

BEAN
Why thank you, Ms. Shiny-Keys!
I think your accent is adorable!
I've had fun, but I need to get back to work.
Of course you can have my number!

**PANEL FOUR - The shadow is larger and now quite clearly SHADOW's. BEAN looks over his shoulder, offering the unseen SHADOW a big, bright smile.**

BEAN
Hey! Look!
Shine Get!
Wanna come pummel Sonic?
It's good for your glutes.

**PAGE EIGHT**

**PANEL ONE - Inside FREEDOM HQ. Wide panel to fit in a lot of background action. On the left, BUNNIE and ANTOINE keep watch over BARK. At center, ELIAS tries to quietly hold SONIC back, while the hedgehog points accusingly at SALLY. At right, ROTOR tries to put on a happy face as he holds TAILS back by the shoulders while the pup gives SALLY an angry look.**

**In the foreground, at left, SALLY points an accusing finger at FIONA, chewing her out. FIONA hugs herself and doesn't make eye-contact, scowling at the floor.**

SALLY
You have a lot of explaining to do, Fiona!

FIONA (small text)
Sorry for helping out.
Go team.

**PANEL TWO - Close on FIONA as her scowl melts into weakness. SALLY continues to glare accusingly.**

SALLY
That's not the point.
How do you know these two?

FIONA
Look, I . . .
. . . I've had a checkered past, okay?

**PANEL THREE - A reversal of the previous panel, with SALLY up close. She scrunches her face into a scrutinizing look. FIONA fires her a withering look. SONIC approaches FIONA, putting his hand supportively on her shoulders and trying to diffuse things with a smile.**

FIONA
I haven't always been a Freedom Fighter.

SONIC
But you're a welcome part of the team, Fi.
Shouldn't we go looking for Bean?

**PANEL FOUR - String of head-shots and shoulder-up shots as everyone turns in surprise.**

SHADOW (off-panel)
No need.

**PANEL FIVE - SHADOW stands dramatically in the doorway, BEAN slung over his shoulder. BEAN has swirly, cartoon "knocked out" eyes. SHADOW wears a muted look of disdain.**

SHADOW
Happy Birthday, Blue Hedgehog.
I cleaned you yard for you.

**<u>PAGE NINE</u>**

**PANEL ONE - Haven II. Long panel to cap the top of the page. ROUGE glides towards LOCKE, clawed fingers ready to pluck some eyes out. She gives him a cold smile that would be sultry under other circumstances. EVIL SONIC spin-dashes right underneath her, rushing towards LOCKE. LOCKE isn't moving.**

ROUGE
We have to stop meeting like this, Locke.

EVIL SONIC
Hit him before he uses his wacky voodoo!

**PANEL TWO - LOCKE drops low, extending one leg. A jet of green chaos energy sweeps up his leg/shoulder to create a ramp. EVIL SONIC (still in a spin-dash ball) shoots up this ramp, nearly clipping ROUGE in the face. She stops abruptly, wide-eyed.**

ROUGE
WHOA!

EVIL SONIC
GAH!
Tolja!

**PANEL THREE - LOCKE takes the extreme foreground, sneering and glaring. EVIL SONIC can be seen awkwardly unrolling from his spin and landing gracelessly.**

LOCKE
First rule of a Guardian:
Deal with the largest threat first.

**PANEL FOUR - ROUGE smirks and rears back a leg, ready to kick. LOCKE surges forward, fist raised to punch.**

ROUGE
Flattery will get you nowhere, old man.

**PANEL FIVE - EVIL SONIC hops towards us to stand atop the MASTER EMERALD. Not very deep into the background, ROUGE delivers a round-house kick to LOCKE, who raises one arm to block it.**

ROUGE
Evil Sonic!
Give me a hand!

EVIL SONIC
Sorry Rouge, but the birthday boy gets dibs on the goods!

ROUGE
**You jerk!**

**PAGE ELEVEN**

**PANEL ONE - Freedom HQ. SONIC and SHADOW address each other, SONIC smirking, SHADOW devoid of readable emotion. In the background, FIONA rests a shoulder against the wall, looking out the window and looking haunted.**

SONIC
So what's the occasion, Faker?
As you can see, my dance card is full.

SHADOW
I did not come to fight, Blue Hedgehog.
I came to thank you.

**PANEL TWO - SONIC is taken aback. SHADOW hasn't changed. In the background, FIONA snaps out of it and looks down as TAILS offers her a cup of punch.**

SONIC
Thank me?

SHADOW
Without you, the Metal Sonic Troops would've killed Hope.*
You were there for her when I should have been.
So . . . thank you.

EDITORIAL NOTE
*see last issue

**PANEL THREE - SONIC and SHADOW exchange smiles and shakes hands - SONIC's much wider and toothier than SHADOW's. In the background, FIONA ruffles TAILS's hair and smiles. TAILS *beams.***

SHADOW
Know that this changes nothing.
For the moment, I work with Dr. Robotnik and we are enemies.

SONIC
It'd be boring otherwise.
Feel free to get a clue and quit Eggman anytime, though.

**PANEL FOUR - SONIC and SHADOW exchange identical challenging smirks. FIONA and TAILS look up to BUNNIE, who is looking around frantically.**

SHADOW
Worried?

SONIC
You wish, Faker.

BUNNIE
Has anybody seen Bean lately?

**PANEL FIVE - ROTOR stands in the doorway to the BRAIN TRUST HQ. He puts a hand to his mouth and calls while pointing into the room. BEAN stands before the main computer screen. We can get a glimpse of DR. ROBOTNIK on the screen.**

ROTOR
He's in the Brain Trust's room . . .
. . . and he has Dr. Robotnik on the line!

**<u>PAGE THIRTEEN</u>**

**PANEL ONE - SONIC and SHADOW lead the rush of heroes out of the domed top of FREEDOM HQ. In the extreme foreground, we see an egg-shaped capsule sitting in a small crater and smoking. A hatch open and the tip of a metallic tentacle peeks out.**

SFX (hatch - arching)
Hissss….

SONIC
Who wants to bet he sent his Egg Pinata of Doom?

**PANEL TWO - Close-up on the egg-shaped pod being disassembled by metal tentacles.**

CROCTOBOT (ambient)
Worse than that, Sonic!

**PANEL THREE - A tentacle holding a piece of transport passes, partially obscuring the full form of CROCTOBOT, continuing the tease.**

CROCTOBOT (ambient)
Alone, we were threats.
Combined, we are a **nightmare!**

**PANEL FOUR - Large, dramatic panel. SONIC and SHADOW frame the corners of the page and look upon CROCTOBOT, his clawed hands raised to the sky, his tentacles whipping about menacingly.**
**NOTE: Croctobot is a combination of Crocbot and Octobot of the Tails mini-series. The whole bot is Crocbot's upper body mounted on the crown of Octobot's head, distantly resembling Ursula from Disney's "The Little Mermaid." Croctobot is purposefully ridiculous, so don't worry if you go for "terrifying" and can't avoid the undercurrent of "stupid beyond all reason." We'll play up on that next issue.**

CROCTOBOT
Tremble in fear at the
(burst balloon) **Terror of CROCTOBOT!**

**PAGE FOURTEEN**

**PANEL ONE - Haven II. We're behind the shadow-obscured SCOURGE as he passes around the edge of the MASTER EMERALD's pedestal. LOCKE and ROUGE are wide-eyed in shock at what they see.**

ROUGE
Evil Sonic . . . ?

SCOURGE
Not quite, babe.

**PANEL TWO - The rest of the page. SCOURGE tilts his shades down his nose to give us a nasty smile. We need to cringe when we see him. This isn't the lame biker hedgehog anymore, folks. We've got a serious threat here.**

SCOURGE
But a real **Scourge** all the same.

TEXT BOX
To Be Continued . . .!